

Op-Ed

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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TN Libraries Ranked 48th in Country

Thank goodness for Alabama and Washington DC. If you are a librarian, parent, or caring citizen, you may have thought this if you saw the recently released 2004 American Public Library Ratings by Thomas Hennen.

Tennessee is ranked 48th in the country on the quality of library services it provides its citizens. Additionally, *Education Week* gives Tennessee a failing grade of "D+" for the adequacy of its public school spending.

Thankfully all Tennesseans currently have one tool to combat these dismal statistics; it is called TEL.

The Tennessee Electronic Library (TEL), a wide variety of searchable databases that contain information on an extensive range of topics, is available to all Tennesseans at anytime and from anywhere free of charge. Currently, the databases are funded completely with federal monies and

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administered by the Tennessee State Library and Archives.

TEL includes resources that serve the information needs of nearly every citizen. Students can complete homework assignments with reference databases that include thousands of articles on topics that are appropriate for all grade levels. Other databases provide information on health, politics, religion, philosophy, the military and history.

In order for TEL to continue to serve current needs and to increase the size of its collection to help combat the depressing ranking that Tennessee currently enjoys in library and public school spending standards, the State Legislature needs to join the funding effort and provide State monies for TEL.

With \$1 million in State funds, every citizen in the state could be affected for the better. This money would allow the Electronic Library to double in size and offer not only full-text newspapers of all the major Tennessee newspapers, but access to such things as online practice tests for civil service exams, GED, GRE, reference e-books, and more extensive literature resources.

For less than \$1 per Tennessean, all could benefit greatly.

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